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AUTHOR Erickson, Michael E.
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ABSTRACT

Pedagogical approaches, which treat students as empty vessels into which knowledge is deposited, are inappropriate for teaching adults. Teachers of basic college composition courses should recognize the linguistic competence already possessed by adult students when teaching them about the processes involved in writing and helping them develop composing schema. Teaching adults the intricacies of composition requires new perspectives and suitable attitudes grounded in formulated principles and methodologies. The writings of Malcolm Knowles on andragogy, the works of Lev Vygotsky on thought and language development, and the ideas of Mikhail Bakhtin on literature and creative discourse supply valuable perspectives for adult educators. One useful method for teaching composition to adults is the externally guided interactive approach, which helps students "see" writing processes in action as the instructor externalizes the entire process from invention to ultimate draft. Adult students can also benefit from collaborative writing. The use of a personal computer and display panel permits an entire class to compose, write, and revise compositions as a group, with the instructor guiding the class through each step of the composing process. With the composition projected for all class members to see, the student-writers pursue thought/language cul-de-sacs and nonsequiturs, ungrammatical sentence structures, and other problems that even experienced writers encounter. Once the processes of writing are internalized, the instructor can introduce more sophisticated rhetorical styles and techniques. (JMC)

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TEACHING BASIC WRITING TO COLLEGE ADULTS

Michael E. Erickson, Professor
Developmental Education
Monroe Community College
Rochester, New York 14623

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One problem faced by professionals teaching basic composition to returning adult college students is that these students are adults. Pedagogical approaches, originally designed for the teaching of preadults, are particularly inappropriate for the teaching of adults. These preadult teaching methodologies embrace what Paulo Freire calls the "domestication",or "banking", concept of education, where students are viewed as empty vessels in which one deposits knowledge (30). Needless to say,the adult students enrolled in basic college composition courses are not empty vessels but urbane,competent users of thought and language. What they lack is not linguisitic competence but composing schema. In other words,these adults are tyros at composing--beginners at formal writing not formal thought.

Being uninitiated in the conventions of academic discourse,many of these matriculated, undergraduate,adult students are entering composition courses not knowing what actually transpires when one writes. No one,apparently,has ever EXTERNALIZED for these students the processes involved in COMPOSING, WRITING, and REVISING an expository essay.It has always been assumed that these entering adult college students already possessed the composing schema.The approach advocated is one in which these students learn to write college compositions by collaboratively composing, writing, and revising an actual composition.

ADULT EDUCATION PERSPECTIVE

Teaching college adults the intricacies of composition requires new perspectives and suitable attitudes grounded in the formulated principles and methodologies appropriate for teaching adults. The writings of Malcolm Knowles on andragogy (the art & science of teaching adults) as well as the works of Lev Vygotsky on thought and language development and Mikhail Bakhtin on literature & creative discourse supply useful perspectives for educators of college adults.

ANDRAGOGY

Andragogy,"the true method of adult learning"(Anderson & Lindeman 1927 3) was rediscovered and popularized by Malcolm Knowles(1970), who like others in the field of adult learning originally opposed andragogy with pedagogy.These educators saw PEDAGOGY as "the teaching,or leading of the child," ANDRAGOGY as "the leading of the adult" and DEMAGOGY as "the misleading of everyone."

Today, andragogy and pedagogy are not viewed as dichtomous but rather as two ends of the educational continuum,with a realistic approach in a given situation falling between the two extremes(Knowles 1980 43). In fact, some pedagogical approaches like the one romanticized in Professor Kingfield's lecture hall,where students entered with "heads filled with mush" only to leave "thinking like lawyers,"are deemed appropriate when adults are studying disciplines of which they possess little prior knowledge schema. However,in basic college composition courses an

andragogical approach,in which students join a "community of learners" where the distance between teacher and students is reduced,is more appropriate because of the prior verbal thought schemata already posessed and the maturation levels already attained by these adult students.

Knowles and others identified several andragogical principles.These principles are as follows: 1) adults tend toward self-direction and empowerment; 2) adults learn best in collaborative,or community,groups; 3) adults have a rich reservoir of experience and knowledge, 4) adults are performance-oriented;and 5) adults desire immediacy of application (Houle,1961; Knowles,1970; Kidd,1973; Brundage & Mackeracher,1980 Smith,1982; Mezirow,1984). As adult learning specialist Brookfield (1985) points out:

> The aim of adult eduation pratice is the nurturing of self-directed, empowered adults; such adults will see themselves as proactive, initiating individuals engaged in a continuous recreation of their personal relationships, work world, and social circumstances,and not as reactive individuals, buffeted by the uncontrollable forces of circumstance. (48)

It is,also,important to note that ,unlike recently matriculated high school graduates, adult undergraduates do not view themselves as "college students,"a perceived pejorative label, but rather as adults attending college.

In sum,successful college composition instructors according to the andragogical view capitalize upon their adult

students'prior knowledge,acquired languaging skills,and preferred learning style as they facilitate the students' advancement in effective compositional techniques and expression.

VYGOTSKY/BAKHTIN

Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) was a Russian psychologist whose seminal ideas on language and thought development in children and adults have helped researchers and educators rethink many factors associated with these higher psychological functions.To Vygotsky, the higher cognitive and metacognitve processes are first learned through interpersonal interactions that are later internalized as intrapersonal schemata. These higher mental functions are first constructed as forms of verbal discourse between people and then later become the inner forms of verbal thinking (Emerson). In other words, the general path of development of the human mind and sign is from the "outside" to the "inside."(Vygotsky 1972 363)

Since the expressed verbal thoughts of significant others are internalized as inner speech and verbal thought schemata, it follows that the problems of composing and teaching the composing processes,accordingly, are rooted in the sociolinguistic past of the student-writers,or in what literary scholar Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975) calls the "polyphony",the heteroglot of internalized voices that resonate in the minds of writers (Bakhtin 1984). As

and externalizing reflective thought in an instructional conversation,or Group Write.

In sum,successful composition professionals according to the Vygotskian/Bakhtin perspective emphasize the dialogic, interpersonal/intrapersonal nature of thought/language development,where teaching is"...aimed not so much at the ripe as at the ripening functions"(Vygotsky 1986 188).It is through an interpersonal,dialogic externalization of the processes involved in writing that composition neophytes are able to internalize the strategies,conventions and schema essential to what Donald Graves calls the REHEARSING, DRAFTING, and REVISING stages of written discourse.(Murray 19)

EXTERNALLY GUIDED INTERACTIVE APPROACH

Bruffee states that writing of all kinds is actually "internalized conversation re-externalized"(641), Bakhtin's heteroglot of voices. Needless to say,then,much of writing takes place intrapersonally before pen touches paper. The externally guided interactive approach advocated helps adult college students "see" the writing processes in action as the instructor externalizes the entire process from invention to ultimate draft.Through a Group Write approach--with the aid of a personal computer (PC) and a data display panel, which projects the textual image upon an overhead screen--the entire composition class composes, writes, and revises an expository composition. The addition of the PC helps expedite the adult students' development in composing compositions as the externally guided

interactive approach is applied.

By capitalizing on the fact that word processing on a PC and collaborative, interactive learning compliment each other (Shurbutt),the composition teacher aided by the PC and the data show guides the students through the composing processes.For instance,during the Group Write drafting process as the students supply for projection on the overhead the thesis, primary, secondary and concluding sentential elements of a paragraph; the professional at points of confusion reflectively guides,editorializes and elicits posssible solutions to thought/language problems encountered.

Through this externally guided interactive procedure,which serves as an externalized form of consciousness and control, the adult students learn to internalize one or more approaches used in effective college composition,like the one represented in Figure 1. The ten stage process represented emphasizes a technique whereby the Body Paragraphs are developed before the Introduction, Thesis, or Concluding paragraphs. In addition,two incipient concepts are underscored by the ten stage process: 1) COMPOSING precedes WRITING; and 2) the Product (the exposition),which is linear, is actually the end result of Thought (the process), which is circuitous.

During the composing processes as they are externalized and projected for all to see, the student-writers are allowed to pursue thought/language cul-de-sacs and nonsequiturs, ungrammatical sentential structures and the like, so that they can witness,"first-hand", the problems experienced-writers meet when they compose.Through the composition professional's modeling

and editorial comments, students begin to appreciate that writing is much more than merely transcribing thoughts,or inner speech, onto paper. Surprisingly, this is the first occasion these students have ever had in "seeing" objectified the processes used by consummate writers as they,too, struggle to re-externalize internalized conversation.

> Language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions; it is populated--overpopulated--with the intentions of others. Expropriating it, forcing it to submit to one's own intentions and accents, is a difficult and complicated process. (Bakhtin 1981 294)

Once these uninitiated-writers have transformed the externalized metacognitive and metalinguistic self-monitoring,thinking/writing stategies into intrapersonal, internalized composing schemata, then the college instructor introduces into the in-class activities more sophisticated rhetorical styles and techniques, while remediating surface structure errors (spelling, grammar, punctuation) as the need arises.Interestingly enough, this externally guided interactive approach,coupled with the technological innovation afforded by the data show, realizes Mina Shaunghnessy's ideal of a composition class as "the place where the writer not only writes but experiences in a conscious orderly way the stages of the

composing process itself."(1977 81)

CONCLUSION

Cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz writes,

> Human thought is consum[m]ately social: social in its origins, social in its functions, social in its forms, social in its applications.
>
> (360)

The externally guided interactive approach to composition instruction advocated not only capitalizes upon the social context of thought,language and exposition development but also upon the andragogical precepts of adult learning. The use of a PC and a data display panel only facilitates the externalization and the ineluctable internalization of the schema needed for effective exposition production. But most basic, this approach through its dialogic,collaborative format respects the adult nature of the adult college composition students as they learn to re-externalize internalized conversation and force it to submit to their own intentions.

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TEN STEPS TO EFFECTIVE COMPOSITION

1) BRAINSTORM
   List ideas

2) GROUP
   Place similar ideas together

3) BALANCE
   Equalize groups

4) TOPIC CHUNK
   Title each group

5) ORDER
   Prioritize groups

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6) PARAGRAPH
   Body paragraphs

7) INTRODUCTION/THESIS

8) CONCLUSION/ SUMMARY

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9) EDIT AND REVISE

10) FINAL COPY

FIGURE 1
Adapted from CRITICAL THEACHING AND EVERYDAY LIFE (1980) Ira Shor 147-148.

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